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ABSTRACT

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Running Head: SPIRITUALITY AS CORE

Spirituality as Core: Leadership within an Inclusive Elementary School

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Abstract

Administrative leadership is considered a critical component for the successful implementation of inclusive schooling practices whereby students with disabilities are educated with students without special education labels. This ethnographic study of one principal was conducted over a 15 month period in a mid-sized Midwestern city. The results of the study yielded a framework to advance empowering administrative leadership within inclusive elementary schools. The major findings presented were: (a) a supportive environment for critique that provides teachers greater autonomy, encourages risk-taking, and communicates trust that they can succeed with students of varying abilities; (b) a facilitative community that stimulates critique by the principal and teachers in asking questions and considering alternative frameworks for inclusive practices; (c) a community that actualizes a more just, democratic environment coalesces the staff and principal in multiple ways; and (d) empowering principal behaviors are undergirded by a spirituality grounded in six beliefs: the value of personal struggle; the dignity of all people; blending the personal and professional; believing people are doing their best; listening; and dreams.

Intersections of Vision and Practice in an Inclusive School:

An Ethnography of a Principal

The practice of inclusive education developed in response to demands for improved educational outcomes for students with disabilities. Motivation for this movement underscores the belief that all children with disabilities have a right to be educated alongside nondisabled peers, within general education environments, without being segregated because of, or in spite of, perceived potential. Inclusive education is defined as: "a value-based practice that attempts to bring all students, including those with disabilities, into full membership within their local school community" (Udvari-Solner, 1996, p. 101). The voices in support of inclusive schooling are the parents and friends of children with disabilities, children with disabilities, interested school personnel, and legislators concerned about the educational outcomes of students in special education programs. These combined voices have brought the practice of inclusive schooling into the forefront of Special Education programming.

The first federal legislation mandating educational provisions for students with disabilities, *PL. 94-142* or the Education for All Handicapped Children's Act, was passed in 1975. This legislation was reauthorized and renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), *P.L. 101-476* in 1990. The reauthorization of the original provisions found within the 1975 Act was designed to insure equal access for students with disabilities (Yell, 1995). The IDEA includes language describing the law's intent to insure "a free appropriate public education" for children with disabilities within "the least restrictive environment" and when "to the maximum extent possible with their nondisabled peers" (Sage & Burello, 1994). However, despite the presence of

this language within the legislation, its interpretation remains ambiguous. Moreover, as Sage and Burello observe: "While this mandate for the education of students with disabilities has been with us since 1975, it is not local policy in most school districts to include students with disabilities in the particular schools that they would attend if they did not have a disability" (p. 21). Consequently, the development of programs for students with disabilities is often determined by individual school districts and/or by individual special education teachers. Therefore, compliance with this legislation caused many varied program designs for students with disabilities.

Earlier studies of inclusive educational programming yielded research to document its essential components, such as a belief and vision of inclusive education, collaborative teacher teams, effective leadership, and knowledge of the change process. Effective leadership is essential in the development of successful inclusive school communities (Rossman, 1992; S. Stainback & W. Stainback, 1991; Van Dyke, Stallings, & Colley, 1995). Several studies (Giangreco, Dennis, Cloninger, Edelman, & Schattman, 1993; Kozleski & Jackson, 1993; A. McDonnell, J. McDonnell, Hardman, & McCune, 1991; Salisbury, Palombaro, & Hollowood, 1993; Schnorr, 1990) have provided supporting data for inclusive educational programming. The results of these studies consistently cited administrative support as critical to successful inclusive schools. While the principal's role was not the primary focus in these studies (Allen, 1995; Heiss, 1994), the personnel in the schools that have successfully adopted inclusive educational policies and practices report administrative support as a critical component (Rossman, 1993).

Currently, studies regarding the role of administrative leadership within school reform efforts are commonplace. The literature is replete with discussions regarding effective

school-based leadership efforts (Blase & Kirby, 1992; Bredeson, 1995; Capper, 1994; Fullan, 1991; Glickman, 1990; Sergiovanni, 1994). These studies describe the importance of effective leadership within schools, but the recommendations describing school leadership were not delimited as strictly administrator purview. In other words, shared leadership was demonstrated and advanced within the schools implementing reforms successfully (Sergiovanni).

Despite the prominent role advanced by research efforts and discussions about effective leadership in schools, the literature regarding inclusive schooling efforts decried the absence of leadership theory to foster and embrace effective inclusive schooling efforts. Therefore, this study, focusing on the role of the elementary school principal in an inclusive school, was a response to that call. The purpose of this study was to describe and define the role of administrative leadership within an inclusive elementary school. The purpose was coupled with the goal of building upon existing leadership theory and to develop new theory to describe leadership within inclusive schools.

Sergiovanni (1995) and Schein (as cited in Bredeson, 1995) described critical components of effective leadership behavior that empowered staff toward successful restructuring efforts as directly related to the amount of congruity between principal talk and principal behavior. It was essential that teachers worked with administrators who exhibited behaviors that supported their previously stated beliefs (Bredeson, 1995; Capper, 1993; Reitzug, 1994; Reitzug & Burello, 1995). Therefore, research questions were designed to measure the degree of congruity between the principal's stated beliefs and observable behaviors.

1. What leadership behaviors were evidenced by the principal to support inclusive schooling efforts?

2. What leadership behaviors by the principal strengthened the teachers' efforts to develop inclusive educational pedagogy?

Theoretical framework

Inquiry related to these questions was guided by the "Developmental Taxonomy of Empowering Principal Behavior" developed by Reitzug (1994). The taxonomy includes three specific types of empowering behaviors: support, facilitation, and possibility.

The first aspect of the framework, support, was defined as the manner in which the principal "[c]reat(es) a supportive environment for critique" (Reitzug, 1994, p. 291). Within this domain, the research questions guided the collection of examples in which the principal provided teachers greater control and autonomy, encouraged teacher voice, and encouraged risk-taking and collaboration (Reitzug, 1994). Schools successfully adapting innovative teaching strategies attribute a supportive atmosphere as a crucial link to their successful outcomes (Sergiovanni, 1994, 1995).

The second behavior in the framework, facilitation, describes the facility with which the principal stimulates critique. The principal demonstrates this behavior when she models shared problem solving strategies, asks questions about the modus operandi, and highlights attention on policies or practices that may advantage or disadvantage certain groups. The fruits of innovation are often tested by the members' involvement in reflective practices. Opportunities to reflect on

one's day-to-day practices may indeed deepen the level of individual staff member's involvement with and commitment to the innovation (Wheatley, 1992).

To explain further, Reitzug (1994) claimed that stimulating critique is one way to improve on traditional practices and develop more responsive pedagogy. The ways in which the principal responds to teacher criticism and teachers' difficulties in providing an inclusive school/classroom provide a rich source of data for this study. When teachers are asked to accommodate a greater range of diversity within their classrooms, the likelihood of complaint and/or the possibility of requests for modification within the program's philosophy may arise. The principal's response or reaction to these situations provides important data in defining her level of commitment to inclusive schooling.

The third domain within the framework, possibility, was defined by Reitzug (1994) as the manner in which the principal "[m]ak(es) it possible to give voice by actualizing the products of critique" (p. 291). Possibility opens the study's focus to include consideration of the principal's behaviors regarding commitments of time, money, and opportunities for staff development. Studies frequently cite the importance of both tangible and intangible resources for teachers involved with innovative staff development projects (Joyce & Showers, 1995). Too often teachers are required to adapt new strategies without concomitant retraining (O'Hair & Odell, 1995). Therefore, this aspect of the framework, possibility, affords recognition of its critical role.

Methodology

The qualitative research methodology chosen for this study was critical ethnography. The study was built upon the active participation of the researched with the researcher (the first author) as they openly considered all aspects of the inclusive school setting through critical ideological and political lenses. In other words, discourse about policy and practice related to the education of those with disabilities was considered from a perspective on power and voice.

The reference to the political openly admits that power and advantage are foundational aspects of any school policy that sorts children into different classrooms based upon perceived ability. The researcher and the principal discussed inclusion of children with disabilities into general education from this critical perspective. Therefore, from the onset, this study was not conducted using interpretive or traditional ethnography. This distinction may be explained by summarizing aspects of Thomas' (1993) explanation of the difference between critical and traditional ethnography: "Conventional ethnography describes what is; [and] critical ethnography asks what could be" (p. 4). He further summarized the differences:

1. Conventional ethnographers generally speak for their subjects and describe what they see, offering interpretive analysis. Critical ethnographers ask questions and invite the participants to use their own voices to direct the inquiry, report results and attempt to eventuate social change.

2. Conventional ethnographers recognize their bias and work to "repress it" (p. 4) while critical ethnographers "celebrate their political position as a means of invoking social consciousness and societal change" (p. 4).

3. Conventional ethnographers understand that control and power exist within all social structures while critical ethnographers thrive on the "tension between control and resistance" (p. 9).

These broad strokes are not meant to oversimplify or glamorize one perspective over another, but rather, to advance the notion that ethnography can be critical.

Site and Sample Selection

Woodland Hills (WH) was chosen from the 29 elementary schools within one medium-sized metropolitan school district in a Midwestern state because it was the only school that included students with disabilities from all high incidence categories in general education settings. Data from all district schools were examined to identify those that included students with high incidence disability classifications (cognitive, emotional, learning and speech and language) into the general education environment. Additional factors of race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and rate of student mobility were secondary considerations. Because WH (enrollment 480 students) was the only elementary school with an inclusive educational program for the children with disabilities who would typically have attended WH, the selection was made.

Comparing the demographics from WH, it had the second highest percentage of students with minority status (38 %), the second highest percentage of students with lower socioeconomic status (65%), and the highest mobility rates (82%) of the entire district. WH had the greatest mobility rate in the district because it was the magnet for all children living in transitional housing.

Participants

The study included 38 participants: twelve general and six special education teachers, six teaching assistants, two parents, nine children, the building principal, and two district-level administrators. Each of these groups of participants is described below.

Teachers. Eighteen teachers participated in focus group interviews, and of those 18, several volunteered to participate in the more intensive participant observations. All of the teachers involved with the inclusion project during the school year were interviewed in groups during the last month of the school year. The six special education teachers were interviewed in one group and the twelve general educators in another. Teachers who participated in the participant observation devoted considerable time to the research activities. Thus, they are described in greater depth.

Several teachers volunteered for the participant observation portion of the study. Since only two general education teachers were needed, the principal and researcher together decided to involve the most experienced and least experienced for the research. Thus, of the two teachers chosen, one had 29 years of teaching experience and currently taught third grade. The other teacher was beginning her third year of teaching and taught in a four/five combined classroom.

Because Woodland Hills employs a cross-categorical approach to meet the needs of students labeled with special education needs, participating special educators were selected in a different manner. With a cross-categorical approach, educational programming for students with special education labels may be developed and implemented by different special educators. For example, the Individual Educational Program (IEP) for a fifth grade student with the label

emotional disturbance is developed by a special educator with that credential, but is implemented by the special educator (with a different credential) responsible for team teaching in the fifth grade. The organizational format of the inclusive schooling efforts involved placing students with disabilities in twelve of the 24 general education classrooms, sorting students with all labels into all twelve classrooms. Of the twelve, the two classrooms for the study had special education staff assigned to work collaboratively with the general education teachers. The two special education teachers teaming with the third and the fourth/fifth grade teachers were asked if they would be willing to participate in the study and both agreed. All of the other teachers involved in the study were interviewed at least once in a group format, while several others were interviewed individually. Table 1 describes the researcher's involvement with all the teachers.

Insert Table 1 about here

Children. Nine children were interviewed. Three children were labeled as "Talented and Gifted", two children were labeled with emotional disturbance, and two were labeled with cognitive disabilities. The remaining individual interviewees had not been given designated labels. Seven of the nine individual interviews were conducted with students in the third grade classroom and the other two individual interviewees were in the grade four/five classroom.

Parents. Formal interviews were conducted with two parent volunteers. Informal discussions and questions with twelve parents about their satisfaction with the inclusion program were conducted at several evening gatherings.

Principal. The principal of WH, Marta, began her teaching career in 1978 as a special educator; she taught children with emotional disturbance and/or cognitive disabilities for seven years and children in the general education program for one year. In 1986, she earned her administrator's license and was hired as a principal for a small primary (K-6) school. Two years, later, she became a principal of a larger primary school, and in 1993, of the featured school. Marta completed her tenth year as an administrator during the 1995-96 school year.

District-level administrators. Two assistant superintendents were also interviewed. The principal's immediate supervisor offered information about the district policy on inclusion and descriptions of the principal's leadership. The other assistant superintendent was interviewed to gain historical information about the district's inclusive education policy; he began working in the featured district in 1969 as the coordinator of the Special Education Department.

Data Collection

Data were collected from a variety of sources and several research activities. The following sections describe these sources and activities: participant observations in WH, at staff development sessions and extra events; in-depth and focus group interviews; and examination of the archives.

Participant observation. Marta, the principal, was shadowed for eleven days during the course of the study with several additional appointments outside of the school day and beyond the school calendar. Participant observations in the classroom totaled 27 full school days: 8 days in the third grade classroom, 5 days in the combined fourth/fifth grade classroom, and 14 days in a variety of other classrooms or settings. Another activity within the participant observations was

attendance at three staff development sessions which were designed to further the implementation of the inclusive schooling plans. Finally, data were gathered during extra events such as the Fifth Grade Graduation ceremony, the Talent show, a surprise party for the principal's birthday, and several of the monthly movie nights organized by various staff members.

Initially the researcher conducted observations by shadowing Marta and observing without comment. In time, the researcher became more involved in the day-to-day activities of the school (i.e., helping the principal find a child who had run from the school, and others). Following note-taking episodes, the researcher scheduled appointments to review and/or gain clarification.

Observations in the classroom were conducted quite similarly. The researcher entered into shared dialogue with teachers and students about the classroom activities and developed guidelines for purposive note-taking to ensure focus on the research questions. Notes were taken on the following: (a) references that staff and students made about the principal, (b) episodes in which students with disabilities were actually engaged in classroom activities alongside their nondisabled peers, and (c) collaborations between general and special education staff members to plan curricular or behavioral accommodations for students with IEPs.

The researcher made genuine efforts to be involved in the classroom by assisting students and teachers in activities such as recess and field trip supervision, running small group reading and math activities, offering suggestions when asked, and most importantly entering into meaningful and reflective dialogues about inclusive educational practices.

In-depth interviews. A total of 38 people were interviewed. Thirty individual interviews were conducted with the following: the principal, eight teachers, two parents, nine children and

two assistant superintendents. The principal and two teachers were interviewed more than once. Four focus group interviews were held with the following: all of children in the four/five classroom, the general education teachers in inclusive classrooms, the teaching assistants involved with the project, and the special education teachers. The interviews with the principal, teachers and parents followed protocols covering: beliefs regarding inclusive schooling, personal commitment to the development of a strong inclusion program, positive and negative challenges faced with the programmatic changes, and examples of the principal's commitment and dedication to inclusion. Questions posed to the children included descriptions of their classroom environments and impressions of the principal. Interviews with the principal's supervisors included questions regarding the history of inclusive programming in the district, central office support offered to the principal of Woodland Hills, and impressions of the principal's commitment and dedication to inclusive schooling.

All interviews were taped and transcribed. All of the individual interview transcriptions were given to the interviewees for verification. The focus group interview transcripts were shared only with the principal because the teachers had asked that the information not be shared across groups. Only two children were interested in reading their interview transcriptions.

Examination of archives. Archives consisted of a principal compiled set of weekly announcements in which all pertinent information was shared with the entire staff. These announcements were used in lieu of weekly faculty meetings.

Data Analysis

The use of multiple data sources served as a way to triangulate the data, thus

substantiating findings (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Marshall & Rossman, 1995). The procedures of analysis and trustworthiness are discussed and followed by the limitations of the study

Analysis procedures. The data for this study were collected following a multiple step process recommended by Carspecken and Apple (1992) and Carspecken (1996). The five step process includes the following:

1. Compilation of the primary record.
2. Development of the preliminary reconstructive analysis.
3. Generation of dialogic data, to develop another set of data based upon the interactions with the participants during preliminary analysis.
4. Analysis of the information generated in steps one through three, to uncover theory.
5. Substantiation of the new theory.

In the last phases, the interviewing and dialogic inquiry emerged between the researcher and the participants. The accuracy of the themes and reconstructions were assessed during the formation of a theoretical framework to explain the research findings. Participants in the study engaged in a reflective inquiry process to generate dialogic data (Carspecken, 1996).

Trustworthiness. In order to develop a veracious study, Lather (1991) recommended using various methods and multiple data sources to construct theoretical schemes which in effect, triangulate the data. Trustworthiness and validity were built into this study through member checks, prolonged engagement in the research site, analysis of the data through constant comparison, and normative-evaluative dialogue.

Lather's (1991) advice was considered seriously in the formulation of activities for the

research study. The references to the constant comparative analysis and the methods within the five step process described by Carspecken and Apple (1992) and Carspecken (1996) are examples of the continued search for patterns and convergence. The multiple stage data collection/analysis and constant comparison used throughout this study enhanced the face validity of the research because the constant comparative design used in the data analysis forced a continual plowing back and forth of findings with data. This "recycling" as Lather (p. 61) described it, builds greater face validity because the participants have been involved with the reporting and analysis. This was built into the study by repeating interviews with key players, the principal and focus teachers.

Lather (1991) discussed the importance of construct validity in research. This appeared to be the strength of the research methodology offered in this study. Its validity rests on the corroboration between the researcher and the participants. As the journey toward inclusive schooling continued in Woodland Hills, many critical aspects of its evolutionary path were enumerated and illuminated by thoughtful disclosures by all participants in the study, thus offering proof of the validity to this study, using Lather's measure.

Study Limitations

Implications for this study could potentially be limited because of the amount of voice given to the participants through the use of dialogic inquiry. The fact that participants were given the freedom to read, edit, and dialogue about interpretations of day-to-day events could be considered as weaknesses in research.

Others may argue against the generalizability of a study based on one administrator in one school. The criticism of "lack of generalizability" is often leveled at qualitative research.

Dommoyer (1990) directly addresses this fallacy in his seminal chapter "Generalizability and the single case study." He argues, as well as other qualitative scholars (Denzin, 1997), that within the context of rigorous research methods, one can infer theory beyond the particular circumstance. To wit, Reitzug's (1994) framework, on which this study is based, was developed from the study of one administrator in one school. In this article, we are suggesting that existing theory has not considered all aspects of leadership behavior. We offer new aspects to consider, with no claim that we offer the final definitive theory.

Another limitation to this study, designed to study administrative leadership within an inclusive school was the high numbers of students with disabilities in the classrooms/school. One aspect commonly noted within the definition of inclusive schooling is the reflection of natural proportion of students with disabilities both within the inclusive classrooms and the school at large. This tenet of inclusive schooling was not present because of the magnet status at WH for students living in transitional housing, therefore, periodically the number of students with disabilities in general education classrooms exceeded the natural proportions found in the population. Thus, this could be viewed as an additional limitation.

The fact that the principal was a former special education teacher could be viewed as a limitation to the study also. Marta's ability to apprehend the dynamics of folding special education services into the general education service delivery model were probably enhanced because of her background.

Interestingly though, the very aspects defined as potential limitations could be identified as strengths for the study. Because this process required rigorous self-examination, all parties may

have exercised greater caution. The use of WH as the site for the study could prove timely because of the higher numbers of students with disabilities found in certain pockets of urban school districts. As larger numbers of students living in poverty attend urban schools, the attendant figures for special education increase (Harry, 1992). And finally, the fact that the inclusive principal of WH was a former special education teacher could strengthen the understanding of what may be important traits to look for when one attempts to institute effective inclusive educational programming.

Results and Discussion

For purposes of this discussion, the research question are discussed together, and where appropriate, within the context of Reitzug's (1994) theoretical framework (i.e., support, facilitation, possibility). These results lead to the development of a new leadership framework to define and support inclusive practices in an elementary school. The following section includes a discussion of the emerging framework. In addition to discussing the research questions, the following section begins with a discussion of the emerging framework and concludes with implications for practice and implications for future research.

Emerging Framework

Empowering leadership is often discussed within school communities that embrace democratic aims and advance platforms that stress social justice. Reitzug (1994) offered a matrix to support and define empowering leadership and this framework lent support to the findings in this investigation. However, his framework was missing an element discovered in this study, spirituality. This discovery resulted in the development of a new theoretical framework that

embraces empowering leadership within an inclusive school.

In Figure 1, the three aspects of Reitzug's (1994) taxonomy are expressed within a spiral-like shape. This spiral shape figure is a vortex, defined as a whirling mass of energy revolving around its axis. In turn the axis is defined as the core of the vortex, around which all of its energy circulates. The vortex expands the one dimensional framework previously offered (Reitzug, 1994) and depicts the dynamic relationship of the elements found within the vortex. Furthermore, it allows the addition of the "core," spirituality, to the theoretical framework. This core is surrounded by the critical actions of support, facilitation, and possibility in building an inclusive community.

Insert Figure 1 about here

The development of the vortex emerged in direct response to Marta's behavior that supported inclusive practices. Additionally, it resulted from data that suggested Marta's decisions and actions reflected her core values that emanated from her spiritual beliefs. Each aspect of the vortex is described within the context of the research questions.

Leadership Behaviors that Support Inclusive Schooling and Pedagogy

Marta's leadership behaviors that supported inclusive schooling reflected Reitzug's (1994) framework of empowering leadership: support, facilitation, and possibility. In addition, spirituality emerged as Marta's core belief that supported her behaviors.

Supportive Environment for Critique

The leadership archetype of support emerged as a critical aspect of Marta's leadership. She created a supportive environment for critique by providing teachers greater control and autonomy, encouraging risk-taking and communicating trust.

One teacher described Marta's support for critique in the way that she gave teachers the autonomy to make their own choices about which activities would support inclusion:

> I have a teaching style that stresses flexibility and kids' interest. Marta allows people to teach the way that they need to teach. I think that she prefers whole language, but she sees good teaching with basals, for example and she supports that too. I remember how Marta described this one first grade teacher who is no longer here. She would say, 'I could never teach in that room but I know it works for her. I would never impose my style or opinion on her.' Marta realizes that she is afraid to state what she would do in all teaching situations because she fears that others may adopt her style just to please her.

Marta also encouraged staff to take risks and try new methods to work with students labeled with disabilities. She stressed that failure was an accepted part of the learning process and it was considered part and parcel of the experimentation process. A third grade teacher working in an inclusive classroom stated:

> Well, I have felt really supported in some experimentation that I wanted to try like I remember saying to Marta on more than one occasion, '[I]t's so nice to work with somebody who has an idea about what I'm trying to do with kids.' She is willing to look at the overall picture rather than trying to make me fit some type of mold. . . . I've tried

> all kinds of things. . . . When you have all kinds of kids in your class, you just have to try more than one thing and she is more interested in knowing how things turn out than anything else.

Staff and students alike commented that her actions and her words demonstrated faith in their abilities. Marta created a supportive atmosphere for inclusion by trusting staff members. As one teacher noted, "It is like she trusts that you are doing your best and she lets it be known that she is there for you. You can feel it."

Marta cited a story which demonstrated her trust in teachers and furthered the development of a supportive climate for inclusion. During the first quarter of the school year, a teacher in one of the inclusive classrooms was experiencing some personal issues and felt that she needed an extended leave. Because she had several students with emotional disturbance in her classroom, she recommended they be transferred to another classroom. Marta approached one of the general educators who had previously declined involvement in the inclusion program. Marta described her experience:

> There is a teacher at WH, and I certainly don't take credit for this, but it has been phenomenal for me to see how over time the things that you do as a leader that show that you value what people do really make a difference. This particular teacher has been a very good teacher, she is very traditional in a lot of her methods and she has always just kind of bucked the system a little bit. You know, wanting to do what she wanted to do, and if somebody for example, tried to push her into a multi-age class, there was no way she was going to do that, if somebody tried to get her to go whole language, you know no

> way was she going to go along with that. As far as inclusion, she wasn't that sold on it so I didn't try to push her into having an inclusion classroom, but when the problems arose this year, with the other teacher that needed a medical leave, I had to find a different general education classroom for the kids. I approached her and she reluctantly went along with it. She actually told me that she needed to think about it over the weekend and would give me her decision that next Monday. But, then I got this Christmas card from her that said, 'Thanks for helping me believe in myself.' I realized that that was what a lot of it was, she just doubted that she could do that, she doubted that she could handle another adult being in the room, you know, watching her. She doubted that she could deal with the kids, even though she has dealt with all kinds of kids, it was just a lot of self-doubt.

When asked about this situation, the teacher agreed that she had not considered herself as someone who could support inclusive practices for students with disabilities. She thought that she would not be able to meet the students needs. From dialogue with Marta and other inclusive classroom teachers, her thinking changed.

A few teachers did not appreciate how Marta's trusting behaviors affected them. Several teachers felt that Marta sometimes seemed to disregard their feelings. For example, several teamed teaching partners were not getting along well. When one teacher said that she had gone to talk with Marta about her disgust with her teammate's behaviors regarding certain traits, she reported Marta's sentiments as "not very understanding." A couple other teachers reported that at times Marta seemed unsympathetic to their complaints, and or unaware of their challenges.

These incidents, though uncommon, were discussed by several teachers. Marta agreed that the teachers' comments were accurate. She described, and the teachers concurred, that when she responded that way to the staff, it was in direct response to her perception that the situation was really something that they needed to take into their own hands. For example, difficulties with teammates' personalities seemed to Marta as purview for the teachers, rather than cause for her to mediate. One exception occurred. Two teachers were not getting along well and Marta felt that it may not be helpful for the children in the classroom, therefore, she reconfigured that team's composition. Marta's tendency was to encourage staff to settle their own issues. It was her perception that in the majority of situations, staff were capable of solving their own problems. She stated that if she continually intervened in staff relationships, "It would be like telling them that they couldn't take care of themselves." Marta's encouragement that the teachers solve their own problems reflected Reitzug's framework. A key way the principal in his study created a supportive environment for critique was to shift problem solving responsibility to the teachers.

To support inclusive schooling, Marta discussed the need to attract and maintain a staff that was able to see each child's gifts, and in turn develop opportunities for these gifts to be shared with other members of the school community. The staff expressed unwavering belief in the practice of inclusive schooling, but they did describe the fact too that they were a different staff than when Marta first arrived at Woodland Hills. One special educator declared that Marta "cleaned ship" when she came on board. A particular story was repeated several times about one of the teachers who asked for early retirement because of inclusion. Marta recalled the story:

A teacher came up to me and said, 'Did you know that ____ is calling inclusion,

'intrusion'? I said, 'How interesting.' I went to talk with this woman, told her that I heard she called inclusion, intrusion. Well, naturally she was a bit flustered. She replied, 'Oh, that was just a joke.' I told her, 'We don't make jokes about kids' lives.'

In short, Marta created a supportive environment for critique, but not critique of inclusive schooling. One way she created this environment was stating her beliefs about inclusion at the beginning of the school year, and then allowing staff attrition and new hires to help create a supportive environment. Thus all staff knew her bottom line was inclusion. The district administration hired Marta, in part, because of her inclusive philosophy and they supported her goals of inclusion. She sought to create a supportive environment for the critique of possible paths to reach inclusion, but the goal itself was not open to critique.

Facilitation

Marta's facilitative behavior to stimulate critique included encouraging teachers to consider alternative frameworks for practices and asking questions. A substitute teacher complained about a student with a behavior problem and concluded "he ought to be self-contained." Marta's quick response, "What good would that do?" reflected how she would ask a question in response to someone else's pat solutions to problematic issues.

By stimulating critique, the staff at WH found that they were able to improve on their traditional practices resulting in more fully including students with disabilities in the classroom. For example, Marta offered many opportunities for staff to learn ways to implement cognitively guided instruction (CGI) in the area of mathematics. A district staff member, Mary, was particularly interested in the extension of CGI to students labeled with disabilities, as a curricular

accommodation within the general education setting. Concurrently, the staff were deciding upon a new math series for WH. Many of the staff wanted to adopt a text that emphasized a more rote approach to math, contrary to the CGI method. During the textbook adoption staff meetings, Marta asked Mary to attend with her. Together, Marta and Mary purposively asked poignant questions to the members of the adoption committee such as: how will you provide concrete examples and opportunities to apply problem solution strategies for students with disabilities, have you witnessed the application of CGI math methods within inclusive classrooms, what problems would you foresee students and/or staff experiencing with the adoption of one text over another, and finally, would you be interested in visiting inclusive classrooms where teachers effectively utilize CGI methods? As a result, the discussions revolved directly around responsive pedagogy to meet the needs of students with disabilities in the general education classrooms.

Over time, examples were noted in which staff and students extended facilitative opportunities to each other, too. From the reliance on cognitively guided instruction, multiple methods to teach reading and the use of thematic and experiential-based learning, inclusive schooling strategies had taken a foothold within the entire school improvement network. Often at staff development sessions, general education teachers often asked, "How will this work for students with special education labels?"

Possibility/Actualization

The third archetype for empowering leadership behavior was possibility. How did Marta make inclusion possible, that is to say how did she actualize a work environment that supported the tenets of inclusive education for staff and students?

Teachers described Marta's ability to coalesce the staff as the glue that kept the foundation for inclusion together. Another teacher commented, "she doesn't run away from problems. You can go up to her and ask her what she thinks and she actually listens and helps [us] develop options for kids while still maintaining her commitment to inclusion." The times that the principal actively committed time, money, attention and/or resources to the staff and students at Woodland Hills provided many examples of rich tangible and intangible offerings.

For example, when students at WH experienced behavioral problems, the Eagle Team would respond. Marta realized that many of the children labeled with emotional disturbance whom teachers would send to the office after disruptions in the classroom needed to resolve issues with their classroom teacher, rather than engage in dialogue with the principal who knew nothing about the infraction. Therefore, Marta set up a rotating schedule assigning staff members without direct student contact membership on the Eagle Team. When a student experienced behavioral difficulties, the teacher had the option to call the office for an Eagle Team member to come to the classroom. The staff member would then substitute for the teacher who could leave the room with the student to develop a solution or to talk things over.

The way Marta developed monthly faculty meetings ensured that these meetings provided the information and skills necessary to actualize inclusive pedagogy. All information regarding upcoming meetings and/or news items was shared in the form of weekly newsletters so that staff were kept informed without being required to attend meetings that focused on news events. Furthermore, Marta used faculty meetings, "to model effective teaching . . .[through] the way that I structure meetings. How could I ever expect teachers to do something I hadn't modeled

myself?" Marta believed that successful inclusive pedagogy required teaching strategies that were holistic, thematic, hands-on, and reality-based. Therefore, she planned monthly meetings to feature specific teaching strategies by WH staff members. She required all of the teacher-presenters to involve the attendees and to avoid lecture presentations. One example involved the occupational therapists (OT); Marta realized that the majority of staff members at WH did not understand the therapists' roles within inclusive pedagogy. Therefore, Marta asked the occupational therapists to inservice the staff. The faculty were amazed at how much they learned about such things as pencil grip, penmanship, and fine motor control, skills that they put to use not just with students with labels, but with all students in their classrooms.

In summary, Marta supported, facilitated and potentiated an environment in which inclusive schooling could flourish. These conclusions were drawn from and corroborated by all data sources. And yet, as said before, there was a deep element that was missing in this analysis. The element of spirituality added a new dimension to the understanding of the leadership paradigm under which Marta operated.

Spirituality

Marta's leadership to achieve inclusive schooling was empowering: supportive, facilitative and actualized. Yet, Marta's behaviors seemed to stretch the existing framework to explain empowering leadership. For example, behaviors described as ethical, caring, humble, patient and loving were mentioned by various participants throughout the study. These characteristics have been discussed in contemporary publications in a variety of ways (see Beck, 1994; Bolman & Deal, 1995; McLaughlin & Davidson, 1994; Noddings, 1988; Sergiovanni,

1992; Starratt, 1991). However, these traits have not been discussed within Reitzug's (1994) empowering leadership framework. When Marta was asked to consider and explain her thoughts on support, facilitation and actualization, she responded, "Spirituality is the core of my leadership." Though spirituality may have been a motivating force in the administrator's actions in Reitzug's study, the principal in his study did not explicitly articulate these beliefs, nor did Reitzug consider this aspect in his conceptualization.

Marta defined spirituality as ". . . what people believe about the human spirit and kinds of values that they have for people." She further explained: "Spirituality has nothing to do with organized religion." The fact that Marta framed spirituality within educational leadership as something beyond religious affiliation is important because as she described it, spirituality referred specifically to her capacity to center her decisions on issues of personal dignity and individual value. She referred to the book, Peace is every step by Thich Nhat Hanh (1991) by describing her life as a "work of art", one in which she strove to shrug the nagging call for pragmatism by asking such questions as: "What would our schools be like if we could talk about how difficult it really is to meet the challenges that these children bring to our lives instead of talking about things such as third grade reading scores?"

Marta's spirituality was reflected in six fundamental beliefs: (a) the value in personal struggle, (b) the value and dignity of the individual, (c) merging the professional and the personal (d) that people are doing their best, (e) the importance of listening, and (f) the importance of dreams. These six beliefs formed the foundation of Marta's spirituality and are the underlying threads that wind their way through Reitzug's (1994) framework. Each of these beliefs are

discussed below in relation to how they extend Reitzug's work.

Value in personal struggle. Marta attributed her capacity to effectively create an inclusive environment for staff and students in large part to her personal life experiences. As she described her own family, she shared aspects of her past that she deemed significant:

> I was raised with a brother who was hyperactive and brain damaged and had all kinds of troubles in school and nobody liked him and he was the scapegoat for everything. He never had friends in the neighborhood, he never had friends at school, had all kinds of problems going through school and right after high school ended up in prison for armed robbery. I'm telling you these things because I think that part of my ability to relate to people, and to look at people's situations comes from a lot of personal experience with things, too. I know what it's like. I know a lot of things that people go through. My job is to accept people where they are and hope that by what I say and what I do that together we look at things in a different way so that maybe they won't need to have anger or hostility to explain life to themselves.

Marta explained that her spiritual perspective was built upon acceptance of her personal triumphs and tragedies. Although she did not routinely share details of her personal life with her staff, she described an inner confidence that if or when she did reveal stories about herself, that those listening would respect both her decision and her past.

The value and dignity of the individual. For Marta, spirituality referred specifically to her ability to center her decisions on personal dignity and issues of worth. In her words, "Recognizing the inherent value and dignity within each person was a turning point in my life."

Marta's attention to individual dignity was demonstrated in many interactions. For instance, following a particularly emotional meeting with an irate parent, Marta remarked, "She cares about her child. Too often we lose sight of that." In this instance, as in others, Marta would try to hear each person's story, demonstrating her care and concern while she gathered important information about individual incidents.

A teacher at WH with the least seniority was unhappy because, due to declining student populations, she would be asked to transfer to another elementary school. Marta had been working with her to inform school board members and central administration that WH needed to maintain her position for inclusion. About two weeks after one of the central office staff members had sent this teacher her transfer slip, news broke on a local television station that this particular administrator had been arrested for engaging in lewd behavior. This teacher ran up to Marta the next day at school and gleefully reported, "Aren't you glad that ____ got arrested? Maybe that will teach him something. . . . " Before she could go on any further, Marta interrupted her and said, "I can't listen to you talk about another person's misfortunes. If this man has a problem, I don't see how it has any bearing on your getting transferred." This teacher stopped talking and walked away. Marta remarked, "How could I listen to her talk about someone who definitely has some sort of problem like that and not say something?"

Marta's respect for students and staff members who appeared to be marginalized was exemplary. She chose children for important roles within the school when she noticed that they were left out of these positions. At the annual talent show, Marta asked a fifth grade boy, Tom to emcee the show. Tom bore the label, emotional disturbance and he had many difficulties in his

personal and school life which seemed to preclude his involvement in school activities. Marta found an adult volunteer to coach Tom and he seemed grateful and excited to fill the role. When Tom's mother came to the show, she described how different it was to see Tom have such an important job for a school function. She would also purposefully invite and welcome families, telling them that in her school each person who walked in the school door merited respect and inclusion. To Marta, all individuals deserve dignified recognition.

The primacy of her belief in the value and dignity of each individual added a new dimension to Reitzug's (1994) support archetype. Marta reflected this extension in her statement, "[I believe] that people [who] are effective leaders, [are] the most effective leaders often times because of experiences they had that made them more accepting of people and more aware of how to look for gifts in people instead of judging."

In addition, Marta's belief in the dignity and worth of all people reflected the dialectical empowerment strategies that she maintained. The recurring words of dialectical empowerment within the vortex depicted in Figure 1 serve to demonstrate Marta's belief that the development of a community dedicated to embrace human value and dignity was not something that could be etched in stone. She referred to the continual honing process that her values and those within the school community experienced as they developed a collective conscience. Therefore, dialectical empowerment referred to the process employed at Woodland Hills. Decisions were not made from the top and filtered throughout the system. Decisions were ongoing processes, the results of dialogue, the refinement of policy, the search for community, and the use of and respect for personal power.

Merging the personal and the professional. Marta searched for ways that faculty could express their own personal growth and need for support in the workplace. For example, she discussed her need to reconcile the spiritual focus of her support for these adults within the school setting in the following excerpt:

> One of the frustrations that I've had through the whole issue of spirituality in the work place is where that line is. I know how it impacts what I do because I would like to help people have more opportunity to share feelings of self-worth for example. I would love to be able to have like a support group in school, not therapy but I have been reading a book entitled Calling the Circle by Christina Baldwin. It's about something that she calls peer spirit circles. It's kind of taken from the Native American culture because of the way that once a week, she suggests that people from the workplace come together and talk and listen. With the challenges that we have at WH, I imagine that teachers would find incredible support from such an activity.

Marta continued to talk about providing an environment that would support individuals' needs to share joys and sorrows, express hopes and frustrations both with the system and with the difficulties faced in life. She extended opportunities for others to reflect upon their personal growth, engage in self-examination and ask for feedback. At staff meetings, she built in times for sharing highlights and challenges that people faced in their lives. In so doing, she collapsed the barriers between the personal and the professional. She created an environment that supported individuals' needs to share joys and sorrows, express hopes and frustrations both with the system and with the difficulties faced with inclusion.

Belief that people are doing their best. Marta's acceptance of individual reaction to situations within the school/community reflected her belief that people do their best. Marta discussed aspects of her personal growth, "life is full of different stages of development, personal acceptance and growth." Marta also discussed the lives of others, noting that people who seemed angry or aggressive were undoubtedly in pain, and perhaps unable to express their unhappiness in other ways.

Although she acknowledged acceptance of individual developmental patterns, she indicated that part of her responsibility was to gently nudge individuals to consider other perspectives. This nudging coincides with Reitzug's (1994) facilitation and the stimulation of critique by providing alternative ways to think about teaching. It was one thing to accept personal perspectives as the best possible, and yet another to open the door to new ways of thinking and acting.

For Marta, personal recognition conveyed that people were doing their best. She talked about the role that compliments, praise, recognition, and reward played in the lives of her staff and students. Though Reitzug (1994) mentioned the importance of the principal providing time for staff to collaborate, Marta gave staff and students rewards of her personal time and she maintained a high level of presence within the building. She also successfully requested staff participate in rewarding activities for students after school hours without additional compensation. These activities included dances, talent shows, pizza parties, and fun fairs. Her appreciation of staff permeated to relations between staff. Though a few of the teacher teams struggled, over-all the teachers appreciated and supported one another and seemed to genuinely

enjoy one another. One teacher described the sense of support gained from working in tandem with special educators:

> She is always right there for me, if I can't get to someone, I look and she is right there helping the child. During parent teacher conferences, she was right there with me for each one. She shared her perspective with the parents and we were really a team.

Another teacher described her teaming relationship: "Just to have her recognize that inclusion was positive and healthy for all kids was great."

Importance of listening. Another expression of Marta's spirituality was her consistent, intentional listening to staff and students. As one teacher said, "I would say that the thing Marta does best and this is what I appreciate the most is that she listens. . . . [P]eople feel much better if they have been heard, not just pretend listening, actual listening." Marta described her listening which grew out of spiritual beliefs:

> I learned to value people, I learned to not interrupt, which is such an important part of leadership. I learned to be available for people. I am much more available to people than I used to be. When I talk with people, I really listen, I am there with them. I don't feel like I have to know what to say or what to do next. I just feel like part of my spiritual groundedness has helped me not to have an agenda.

Her listening undergirded her empowering behaviors serving as a connection between support, facilitation and possibility. If staff knew they would be heard (support), they felt more free to share their opinions (facilitation of critique). One way to show staff she heard them was to make a decision or take action based on their opinions (possibility). A teacher described the way

that Marta listened and acted upon staff feedback:

> I think Marta has done a wonderful job in trying to take care of our CD youngster (sic) who has been giving us a lot of problems. She has gotten us help, having another teacher here who is just a one-on-one with her has been an incredible help. She has been an advocate for us downtown. . . . and with this parent too who has been a bit irrational. For example, at one of the meetings the mom was splitting hairs on certain issues and I think Marta very nicely encapsulated what was happening and was able to challenge, not so much challenge, but to back up what we were doing and justify the reasons that we have done some of the things that we have done.

Marta listened to children also. One child described a meeting with the principal in which she had complaints about her class having too many kids labeled with disabilities:

> Well, I know that she believes we can learn a lot from different types of people and I thought if you had all the faster learners in one class and slower ones in a different one that it would make it easier. But when she explained that you learn a lot from different people, I realized that that was true and I think that is why my classroom is okay. I talked to her about that more, like I said, but since I thought it would be better to have classes by ability, not by age then she thought I was special. She asked me if I wanted to have a penpal in another country and if I would like to have regular meetings with her.

Belief in dreams. "Don't doubt the dream," was literally and metaphorically uttered by Marta throughout the course of the study and provided a unique depth to another aspect of actualization. She looked for ways to accomplish tasks rather than making excuses or searching

for blame agents.

One example of Marta's belief in dreams occurred when she arranged a two-day intensive program on curriculum accommodations for the staff. The teachers and assistants had been quite vocal about their need for more information regarding appropriate curricular adaptations for students with disabilities. After securing the services of a team from the local university whose specialty was curricular accommodation, and a location outside of the school building; Marta was notified by the central office staff that no substitute teachers were available for that day. She was told to cancel the event. But she realized how important the inservice was for the staff. What resulted was the development of a two-day activity for 250 WH students including field trips, special interest groups, and creative arts activities connected with the book, James and the Giant Peach. Using the money allocated for substitutes, she secured buses and admission tickets for students. Marta herself coordinated all the activities, and with assistance for supervision from the support staff and various parent volunteers, the inservice program became a reality.

Summary

Staff members described many problems they dealt with as they implemented inclusive pedagogy. For instance, the experienced challenges with accommodating the curriculum, learning to solve problems among them without relying on the principal to mediate, and a lack of collegiality in a few of the teaching teams.

Marta's behaviors strengthened the teachers' capacity to both develop an accepting atmosphere for inclusive schooling strategies and accommodate diversity in their classrooms with the development of more responsive pedagogy. The exit interviews with the staff and the

principal summarily defined the prominent role empowering leadership--as expressed through support, facilitation, possibility and undergirded by spirituality--offered to the successful institution of inclusive schooling and pedagogy.

Findings from the research confirmed the relationship between beliefs and actions, the importance of vision and strong leadership The results from this study can be summarized within the context of the vortex described in Figure 1:

1. The development of an inclusive community is predicated on an atmosphere that facilitates critique, stimulation, and continual revision of its practices.

2. The result of an inclusive schooling effort is the actualization of a more just, democratic environment with promising potential for its members.

3. The decisions made within the actualization process must be verified through the core spiritual values held by the community's collective consciousness.

4. Spirituality ungirds and weaves through the various dialectical processes of support, facilitation, and actualization evidenced in a community that values each member equally.

Implications for Practice

The results of this study underscore the importance of the building principal. The recent push for site-based management within schools may have taken the focus away from recognizing the significant aspects of leadership, and the importance of a role model. Through the use of support, facilitation, and possibility, all undergirded by spirituality, this principal strengthened teachers' capacities to accommodate students with disabilities in general education settings. Thus, the building principal served as a role model for the development of a democratic, responsive

educational community. It is imperative that principals who serve in these roles, know their spiritual and ethical core values. As demonstrated in this study, these core values are reflected in the conduct of the day-to-day life of the school.

In this study, the teachers reported that they faced challenges as they attempted to operationalize the tenets of inclusive schooling. These challenges included over-extension of teaching skills, lack of collegiality within certain teaching teams, and the need to deal with the processes of change as new demands arose. The development of an ethic of caring (Noddings, 1988) and a greater sense of community (Palmer, 1993), as demonstrated by this administrator, appeared to mitigate the potential problems caused by these challenges.

Lastly, the results of this study suggest that principals also need to maintain a steady presence within pedagogical reforms. In order to guide and direct effective school programs and to help staff acquire critical skills, principals must keep abreast of recent developments. Principals ought to (a) examine the necessary issues of systemic reform when embracing paradigmatic shifts such as those required to develop effective inclusive schools and (b) study educational innovations such as constructivist learning theories and cognitively guided instruction, cross-age grading and looping configurations, block scheduling and integrated thematic instruction along with teachers. As the complexion of our public schools continues to diversify and the demands put on educators is magnified, those within administration must work in tandem with teachers.

Implications for Research

As a result of this study, future research should examine a variety of issues. First, there is the question related to the role of spirituality in school administrator's practices. Is spirituality an

essential quality in effective leaders, particularly those who initiate such fundamental reform as inclusive education--a reform that challenges our most basic values? What role does spirituality play in the practices and decisions of our school leaders? Is effective leadership for inclusive schools the same as effective leadership within other reform initiatives? Additionally, future research should consider some day-to-day issues related to inclusion. These day-to-day issues include those raised by the teachers who participated in this study: (a) what is the impact of collegial teaching teams in terms of developing responsive pedagogy within inclusive classrooms, (b) what sources of support are necessary for staff who are confronting and attempting to accommodate the challenges of educating students with significant challenges in the public school classrooms (low SES, lack of permanent housing, poor academic skills), and (c) what impact does the cross-categorical programming model for special education have on both service delivery to students with disabilities and on the teachers' perceptions of effectiveness?

Researchers ought to further consider the use of critical ethnography within public schools. This research could reduce the disparity between research and practice, and in doing so, push toward social change to address educational inequities.

Summary

Findings from the research confirmed the relationship between beliefs and actions, the importance of vision and strong leadership. The results from this study can be summarized within the context of the vortex described in Figure 1. The development of an inclusive school community is predicated on the following assumptions:

1. A supportive environment for critique provides teachers greater autonomy, encourages

risk-taking, and communicates trust that they can succeed with students of varying abilities.

2. A supportive environment is open to the critique of the multiple ways to reach inclusion, but the goal of inclusion is not open to critique.

3. A facilitative community that stimulates critique includes the principal and teachers asking questions and considering alternative frameworks for inclusive practices.

4. A community that actualizes a more just, democratic environment coalesces staff and the principal models inclusive practices in meetings and staff development.

5. Empowering principal behaviors are undergirded by a spirituality grounded in six beliefs: the value of personal struggle; the dignity of all people; blending the personal and professional; believing people are doing their best; listening; and dreams.

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Table 1.

Woodland Hills Teaching Staff with Inclusive Classrooms and Involvement with Study

Position Sp. = Special Education	**Years Teaching**	**Observed**	**Interview**	**Type** I = Individual G= Group	**N, N w/ disabilities**	**Volunteer**	**Selected**
K	11	X	X	G	20, 1	No	
K	29	X	X	I	19, 3	No	
K	4	X	X	G	21, 4	No	
Sp. & K	7	X	X	I & G	19,3-21,4	No	
Sp.& 1, 3	5	X	X	I & G	16,3-21,4	No	
1	28	X	X	G	16, 3	No	
1-2	12		X	G	18, 3	No	
1- 2	9		X	G	19, 4	No	
Sp. & 1-2	2	X	X	G	19,4-18-3	No	
3rd	3	X	X	I & G	21, 4	Yes	
3rd	**12**	**X**	**X**	**I & G**	**22, 6**	**Yes**	**Yes**
Sp.&1-2, 3	**3**	**X**	**X**	**I & G**	**19,4-22,6**	**Yes**	**Yes**
4	6	X	X	G	20, 4	Yes	
4	24	X	X	G	21, 5	No	
Sp, 4	2	X	X	G	20,4-21,5	No	
4-5	**4**	**X**	**X**	**I & G**	**21, 5**	**Yes**	**Yes**
Sp. & 4-5	**4**	**X**	**X**	**G**	**21,5**	**Yes**	**Yes**
5th	29	X	X	G	21, 5	No	
5th	19	X	X	I & G	20, 4	No	
Sp. & 5	1	X	X	G	21,5-202,4	No	

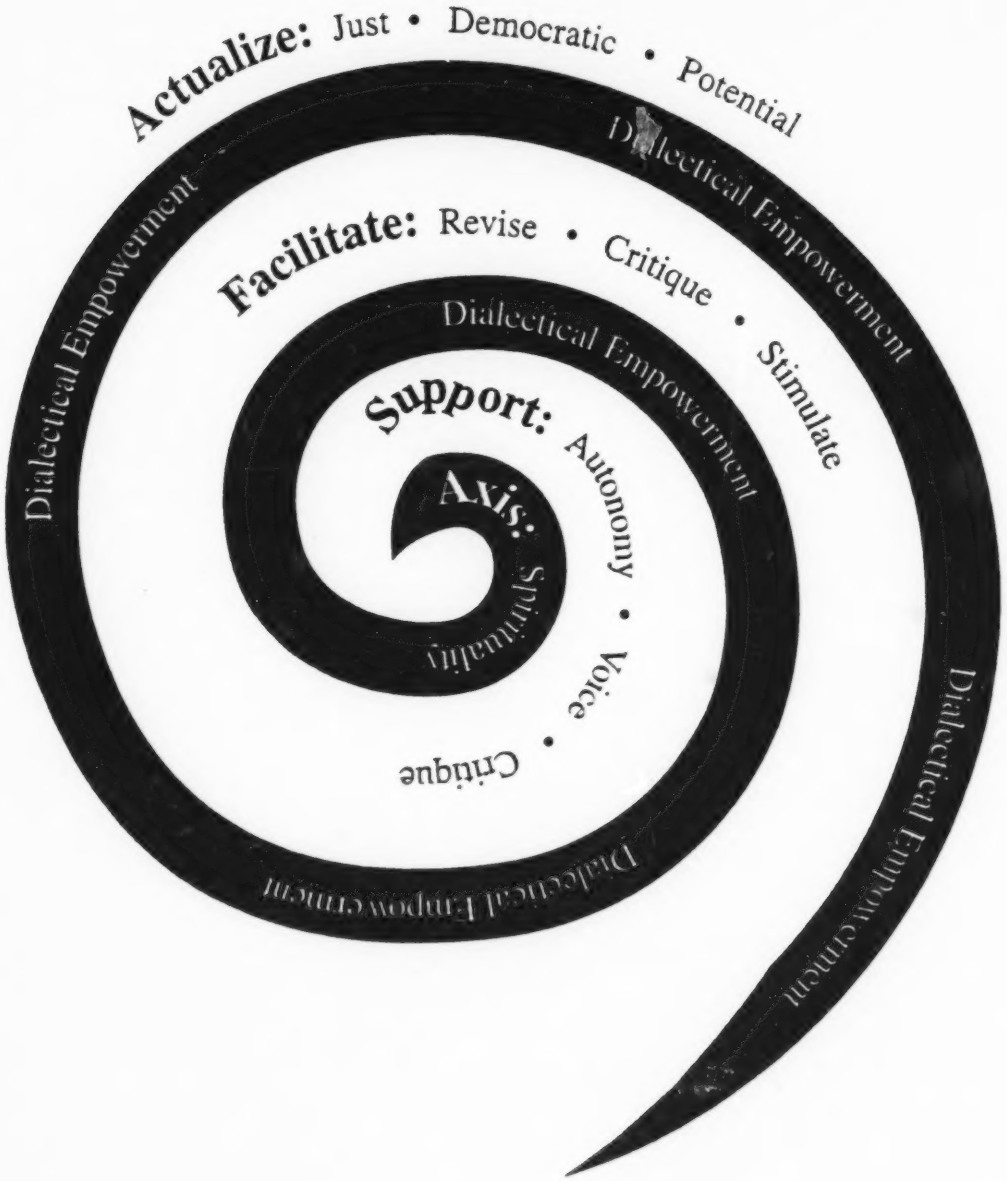

Figure 1. Empowering Leadership Vortex within Inclusive Elementary Schools

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